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ABSTRACT

A comparison of the management of institutions of higher education with that of other types of enterprises is presented. The first section explores how management is affected by the purpose of the enterprise and the environment within which it operates. The impact of the external environment is assessed and three types of internal organizations are defined: coercive, utilitarian, and normative. Differing organizational structures, such as the distribution of authority and the shifting of leadership, are examined in Section Two. The process of decision-making and management is surveyed in the third section, followed by a discussion of the degree of accountability required of the enterprise and the methods of managerial control that are applicable. A final section summarizes the distinctive characteristics of the college or university and suggests how academic managers manage. (Author/PHR)

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Topical Paper No. 16

MANAGEMENT OF THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY: IT'S DIFFERENT!

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MANAGEMENT OF THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY: IT'S DIFFERENT!

by

John J. Corson

Center for the Study of Higher Education
College of Education
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Management of the college or university is generally believed to differ from the management of other enterprises. But **HOW** does it differ? And **WHY**?

William James, the philosopher, once wrote of "the infinite value of non-habitual perception," i.e., one can learn by looking at what is familiar from fresh viewpoints and different stances. James' aphorism suggests that one can learn much about the management of a college or university by comparing its management with that of a business enterprise, a government bureau or a non-profit agency, a library, a theatre or a hospital. That is what it is proposed to do here: to compare the management of institutions of higher education with that of other types of enterprises and to note the differences that obtain.

Subsequent sections of this paper will compare how the management of enterprises is affected by

1. the purpose of the enterprise and the environment within which it operates.

2. the differing organizational structures that are used.

3. varying processes of decision making and of communication.

4. the degree of accountability required of the enterprise and the methods of managerial control that are applicable.

On the basis of analysis of such elements, a final section will briefly summarize the distinctive characteristics of the college or university and suggest how academic managers manage.

PURPOSE, ENVIRONMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Two simple propositions are elemental to consideration of the varying nature of management in business enterprise, in government, in higher education, and in non-profit institutions.

The first is that each organization in each of these fields exists for a purpose, i.e., to serve one or more objectives.

The second is that the purpose for which the organization exists, fixes the organization within a specific environment.[1]

Impact of Purpose on Management

A business enterprise exists to manufacture shoes, to operate a hotel or to sell real estate. A government bureau exists to protect the national forests or to protect the public health. A university exists to produce and to disseminate knowledge – some in limited fields (e.g., Princeton or MIT), some in many fields, (e.g., the University of Michigan). A non-profit agency exists to operate a museum, to provide visiting nurse services, or to facilitate the adoption of children.

Such purposes influence or dictate the inputs and outputs of the organization, in many instances the location (e.g., near sources of supply or markets), the kind of workers (e.g., the proportion of blue collar, white collar and of professional workers) that it requires, and often engenders either favorable or unfavorable attitudes in the society. Contrast, for example, the social approbation usually accorded the college, the university or the bank and the disfavor with which the gambling casino must cope.

Impact of External Environment

Organizations in every field have been exposed during recent years to three external forces:

1. Inflation coupled with recurring economic ups and downs.

2. A widespread demand that discrimination against women, blacks, and other minorities be eliminated.

3. The challenging of traditional authority (e.g., the unionization in the military forces, the uprising of students in the universities, children's relations with parents, and the challenging of dictates of the Catholic Church by young priests).

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1. Chester Barnard first pointed out the significance of the external environment in his *The Functions of the Executive* (Harvard University Press, 1938, p. 71). There he wrote "it appears necessary to regard as part of an organization certain efforts of many persons not commonly considered 'members,' for example, customers or those persons that are only treated as members in special senses, for example, stockholders, who in the legal sense are the organization; or bondholders, who are important contributors to the organization yet who are at most ordinarily viewed as only contingent members."

Simultaneously, organizations in every field have felt some increase in the intervention by "outsiders."[2] Space will not permit the spelling out of the extent of intervention in each field. Let it suffice for the following table to suggest the varying kinds of intervention experienced and to stimulate the readers' comparisons.

Table I

INTERVENTION FROM THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

"Outsiders"	Business Enterprises	Government Agencies	Colleges & Universities	Non-Profit Institutions
Constituents	Consider, for example, illustrations of the "regulators" found in each field: in business, the Federal Trade Commission and the Securities and Exchange Commission; in government, the legislatures backed by constituent pressures; in higher education the accrediting agencies, state coordinating councils, and, in some measure, the governmental grant agencies; and for the non-profit agencies, professional accrediting agencies such as the Joint Hospital Accreditation Board.			
Employee Unions				
Financiers				
Regulators				
The Media				
Governing Boards				
Adversaries				

The intellectual exercise stimulated by this table will suggest that the college or university is not unique in the fact that its management is continually and increasingly affected by the kindly ministrations of a variety of "outsiders." It may reveal that the college and university have been subjected to every greater intervention within recent years. Organizations in every field are subject to such intervention. The college or university suffers uniquely from this increasing intervention because it (and particularly the public institution) has lost a long observed and long prized autonomy.

2. See Lyman A. Glenny, "The Anonymous Leaders of Higher Education," *The Journal of Higher Education*, January 1972, pp. 9-22; see also, for contrasting and supplementary point of view, Homer D. Babbidge, Jr., "The Outsiders: External Forces Affecting American Higher Education" in R.J. Ingham, ed., *Institutional Backgrounds of Adult Education*, Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, Boston University, 1965, pp. 81-89.

It is unique also in the nature of the relationship between the organization and its members. The relationship with students particularly is ambiguous. To a lesser degree the relationship between the institution and faculty members and trustees suffers from a similar ambiguity. Each individual in these groups is associated with the institution on a more or less transitional basis and is simultaneously a member of other outside bodies: the taxpaying public, organized pressure groups such as the teachers and nurses, a professional body such as the chemists or historians, or the alumni. The result is that often the "managers" of a college or university are dealing with groups that, at one time, are supporters as "members" of the institution and, at other times, foes striving to subordinate the institution to their will.

The result of greater intervention by "outsiders" in a college or university or in other organizations is the same: ". . . when professional organizations are well 'insulated' from environmental influences then professional values, professional norms, and professional work definitions dominate the processes of the organization. When external influences increase, the professionals within are frequently reduced to the role of hired employees doing the bidding of bureaucratic managers — and the level of bureaucratic regulation increases sharply" (Baldridge, p. 119).

Impact of Internal Environment

Purpose impacts on the internal environment. Particularly, it determines the makeup of the work force, the proportions of blue collar, white collar, and professional workers. More important, it influences the culture of the work force: the beliefs and values of those attracted to the organization. A different culture prevails among those professional workers of like intelligence and skill attracted to business, those attracted to government, and those attracted to the universities.

High level talent attracted to a business corporation will likely be aware of and attracted by the competitive environment that obtains and the accompanying pressures, control, and regimentation. Similar talent attracted to government will likely include individuals attracted by the social objectives to be achieved (e.g., the protection of consumers), the recognition accorded political leaders, or the security provided for civil servants. Equally competent talent attracted to institutions of higher education will likely include individuals possessing much intellectual curiosity and willing to trade greater rewards for a relatively free and unregimented work style.

The culture that prevails in each type of organization will be further differentiated by the degree of compliance that characterizes the relationship

between subordinates and superiors. Using this yardstick, Amitai Etzioni has classified organizations as:

Coercive - those in which coercion is the principal means of managerial control; e.g., a prison, a mental hospital.

Utilitatian - those in which remuneration is the major means of control, e.g., factories, mines, governmental agencies.

Normative - those in which a high degree of commitment prevails and the allegiance to organizational goals serves as a means of control; e.g., religious bodies.

Generally the internal environment of the college or university is classified as that of a normative organization. Yet the compliance relationship will vary in degree as between the community college, the church-related institution, and the research university. In this aspect of the internal environment of most colleges and universities, the makeup of the work force and its culture, we find factors that markedly affect its management: the organizational structure, the dispersion of decision making, the extent to which conventional controls are applicable, and the kind of leadership required (Parsons, p. 15).

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Organization, as an element of the management process, involves more than the design or redesign of the organization chart. It comprehends four distinguishable, interrelated, and continuing activities:

1. Refining the architecture of the organization. Responsibilities must be allocated among departments, divisions and individuals and reflected in charts and job descriptions.

2. Distributing authority, horizontally as between line and staff and vertically to each echelon. This distribution is reflected in policies and procedures.

3. Fixing the locus of leadership, i.e., identifying who is indeed boss and over what.

4. Creating incentives. "Perhaps the most important aspect of organization," J. Douglas Brown has written, "is those efforts that are designed to induce individuals to put forth their best efforts, to maximize their loyalty to the organization, to create satisfaction in their jobs" (Brown).

With respect to each of these four activities, organizations vary; note the variances.

Variance in Architecture

The college or university exhibits three distinctive architectural features.

1. Typically the college or university has two parallel organizations reporting to the president and board of trustees – the faculty, dominant in size and influence, and the support staffs, e.g., financial, building and grounds, etc.

2. This bifurcated organization reverses the relationship between staff and line that one would expect to find in a business or governmental organization. The staff experts, the teachers and researchers, carry out the organization's production function, while line authority remains with those who supervise support staffs and auxiliary services; i.e., the university administrators.

3. The academic half of the organization is "flat" as compared with its analogues in business or government of similar size. that is, the number of echelons separating the faculty member from the executive with final authority over decisions affecting him/her is markedly limited (but is increasing in public institutions as authority tends to become more centralized!).

Authority Distribution

The dictionary says that **AUTHORITY** is the "power or right to command, to enforce obedience, or to make the final decision." Organizational theory holds, in contradiction, that authority "is the character of a communication (order) by which it is accepted as controlling by those who are expected to obey" (Barnard, p. 163). At the least, the power to command varies as between organizations that fall in each of Etzioni's three classifications (see page 5).

The college or university, a "normative" type, relies on the individual faculty member's desire to conform with educational standards and is usually characterized by a substantial decentralization of authority. The faculty member has greater freedom in deciding what he or she shall teach, how (shall he give a final examination, what research he shall undertake), and how he shall spend much of his time, than do individuals of like rank and skill in business or governmental organizations.

In the teachers colleges of the 1930's, the president often centralized much authority in his own hands. In the community colleges of the 1970's, authority is more concentrated than in the private liberal arts college or in the research university. And the freedom enjoyed by the faculty member in public universities is being diminished as state boards and state coordinating councils, state budget offices, and state personnel offices claim responsibility for an increasing range of decisions. Authority flows to the state agencies, and some to the support staffs within the university who are empowered by state agencies to enforce their dictates (e.g., as to the reporting of the individual's use of his/her time, as well as with respect to purchasing and financial matters).

Shifting Leadership

In the business corporation, employees know who is boss. The owners (the shareholders) elect directors who in turn employ full-time managers, who usually have a clear line of authority. In the government bureau, the director or administrator is appointed by a cabinet member, governor, or mayor. The appointee's authority is less clear; it may be limited by the intrusions of legislative committees, by pressure groups from without, and by staff agencies within (the comptroller or the personnel director).

In the college or university there is no center of authority analogous to the owners of the corporation, to the cabinet member, governor, or mayor. In private institutions, board members selected by a self-perpetuating board or by a sponsoring church are responsible to whom? In public institutions, board members are, in a few instances, elected, but usually appointed by the governor. To whom are they responsible: public, governor, alumni, faculty, students? The president, who is selected by a search committee made up of representatives of the trustees, the faculty, and perhaps students and alumni, owes his allegiance to whom?

To complicate the matter still further, of late the locus of leadership in the college or university is shifting as the autonomy of institutions is diminished. Authority vested in the board of the individual institution is diminished. Authority the board once possessed and usually delegated to the president is usurped by the state agencies. In other instances it is abdicated by the individual boards when they tacitly "approve" new programs forced into the curriculum by such powerful pressure groups as the teachers, nurses, or police, hoping the state board or council will reject them!

As authority is claimed by "outsiders" (the Federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the courts, as well as the state agencies) not only is

the locus of leadership in the academic institution shifted, the character of leadership is changed. Warren Bennis has written that leaders in business, government, and elsewhere have "become an endangered species" (March, p. 6); Lyndon Johnson commented while president that in government "anyone who sticks his head above the grass has it cut off." Whether these assertions be universally true, it is clear that the college and university president beset by intrusions from without tends to become paralyzed, unable to innovate, and even more often politicized. He becomes more responsible to the political authority of legislators and state officials than to educational standards.

Incentives Available

The manager who welds an organization together must reckon with human behavior. He starts with one of three assumptions as to the nature of the individuals he is obligated to lead (March, p. 6). They are **PASSIVE**, willing to do what they are told and undesirous of influencing what shall be done or how. They have **ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND GOALS**, and they have to be shown that the organization has attitudes, values, and goals consistent with their own. They are **DECISION MAKERS AND PROBLEM SOLVERS**; they have a keen desire to make their own decisions, to solve problems as they deem best.

The character of the staffs of educational institutions, business corporations, and governmental agencies varies markedly. But generally the "normative" institutions, the staffs of which include a substantial proportion of professionals, must find ways of inducing individuals who have their own attitudes, values, and goals and wish to make decisions and solve problems to be satisfied in their jobs, loyal to the institution, and eager to put forth their best efforts. How?

The college and university usually lack the incentive commonly used by business, supplementary compensation; so does the governmental agency.[3] It must look to other incentives to convince individuals that their values and goals accord with those of the institution, to claim their loyality, and to stimulate their best efforts. These include the prestige of the institution, grants for research and laboratory equipment, sabbatical leaves, limited teaching loads, freedom in the use of time, a voice in the management of the institution, and association with other scholars.

Viewing that list of incentives emphasizes the differences that obtain as between the ability of the community college or the small private college with

3. Alan Campbell, formerly Dean of the Maxwell School, Syracuse University, and now Director of the Federal Office of Personnel Management contends it need not be so. He has cited the use of supplementary compensation at Syracuse as a precedent for the introduction of bonuses for federal employees.

limited resources and that of the research university with relatively great resources to attract and to hold faculty members. This list of incentives (in addition to compensation of course) utilized by academic institutions goes far toward explaining the great variances that exist in the quality of education provided.

DECISION MAKING AND MANAGEMENT

Centrality of Decision Making

For the organization, the insurance company, the municipal fire department, the college or university, or the symphony orchestra, the making of decisions is the very core of the management process.[4] Those responsible for integrating, stimulating, directing, and evaluating the efforts of the few or many individuals that make up the organization must make, or determine that others shall make, a continuing flow of decisions and must ensure that knowledge of those decisions is communicated downward and upward.

That flow includes decisions of major importance and many of minor or temporary significance. It includes decisions that fix rules designed to guide the discretion of subordinates (e.g., carbon copies of all letters relative to insurance claims involving $10,000 or more shall be submitted for review by the company's counsel); such decisions, customarily described as "policy making decisions" must be communicated to all who are to be guided by them. Other decisions, often made by individuals well down in the organization, have to do with minor and recurring matters (e.g., shall this student who missed the examination in Economics B 1 and now claims to have been sick be given another examination?).

The subject matter of decisions within organizations of all types can be classified in a few major areas: "product line" decisions, those that have to do with the kind of shoes to be made by a business firm or the programs and courses to be offered by a university; financing decisions, current and capital; personnel decisions relative to the recruitment, utilization, evaluation and termination of employees; physical facility decisions having to do with the acquisition, maintenance and replacement of buildings and equipment.

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4. Herbert A. Simon has written that "a scientifically relevant description of an organization" . . . "is a description that, so far as possible, designates for each person in the organization what decisions that person makes, and the influence to which he is subject in making each of these decisions." *Administrative Behavior*, MacMillan Co., New York, 1947, p. 59.

Comparing Decision Making

Consider now these illustrations of differences in the decision making process as between business, governmental, and educational organizations.

"Product line" decisions in the college or university, the content of courses and programs, are generally entrusted to individual faculty members or to the faculty as a body. Similar decisions as to the products to be made or marketed by a business enterprise (the introduction of the Chevette automobile or a new brand of cereal) will usually be made by executives at the topmost level. Similarly, for the government agency, a change in the services to be provided will be made at the topmost levels, often by the governing legislative bodies.

So it is with decisions as to academic personnel. Decisions are made in large part by department chairpersons and usually with the concurrence of the departmental faculty members. In the selection of department chairpersons, vice presidents, and even presidents, the faculty members (the "working stiffs" of the academic community) customarily have a voice. Analogous decisions as to the selection and promotion of personnel in industry or in government or within the administrative staffs of educational institutions are usually made by executives or officials at higher ranks, and there is normally little consultation with fellow workers. The governmental process is rigidified and further centralized, outside the institution itself, by civil service processes.

Responsibility for financial decision in the college and university, in stark contrast to the responsibility for "product line" and personnel decisions, is highly centralized, and often without the institution. In the private institution, decisions as to capital and current expenditures are largely controlled by the presidents, with affirmation by their governing boards. On occasions these decisions will be notably modified by donors or grant-awarding agencies.

Business and governmental organizations are spared the interference by donors. Their financial decisions are subject to highly centralized controls; the business organization's major financial decisions may be subject to the concurrence of bankers, and the governmental agencies' (including public colleges and universities) financial decisions are subject to more or less rigorous control by legislative bodies or executive budget agencies.

In summary, a larger portion of the decision making process is decentralized in academia than in other fields. Responsibility for basic decisions as to the character of the enterprise (its product line and its staffing decisions) are entrusted to the professional personnel below executive ranks. One may wonder whether the pattern common to many academic institutions will be followed in

business and governmental organizations as the proportion of professional workers in their work forces persistently grows.[5]

ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL IN MANAGEMENT

A similar speculation may be indulged in with respect to the "controls" that are utilized within the college or university. Conventional managerial wisdom dictates that if a number of individuals are to collaborate effectively in an organization, if coordination is to be achieved, goals must be set, plans laid, and controls exercised to ensure that plans are carried out and goals achieved.

In the lore of modern management, the conventional mechanics of control are pictured simply in these words:

> *"For a ship to reach its destination without sailing far off course, the captain regularly takes his bearings. A manager, likewise, has to measure his process if he is to attain his objectives. And when he discovers that operations are not proceeding according to plans, he takes corrective action we call control"* **(Newman, pp. 11 and 12).**

To carry on the monitoring of operations and the evaluation of current status that he (the manager) may take corrective action when needed, such management tools as the Gantt chart (1913), the budget and periodic reports of expenditure versus the budget, the sales quota, the PERT chart, PPBS, and Management by Objectives (MBO) have been invented. Each makes use of **goals** of more or less tangibility; **plans** for achieving goals; **measures**, e.g., "pars," "milestones," etc.; and often a **system of rewards**, such as the commission associated with the sales quota.

The business corporation has a large advantage over either the government agency or the academic institution in achieving control. It has one quantifiable measure of performance: profits (whether the measure be stated as the rate of earnings on invested capital, profits per dollar of sales, or earnings per share). The government agency or the college or university has no such simple or tangible measure of control. Its goals may be general and intangible, and thus difficult to control in mechanistic terms. The support services of the university

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5. J. Douglas Brown, op. cit., has pointed out that professional workers "are more responsive to judgments of informed colleagues than to those of persons whose authority arises from status alone."

** Wm. H. Newman and Chas. E. Summer, Jr., *The Process of Management*, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1961, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. pp. 11-12.

offer an exception to this general rule, but the basic educational activities have defied the application of measurable controls.[6]

In the absence of business' customary means, and because professional workers need appraisal of their performance by some means, academic institutions rely for the evaluation of teaching and research on peer group control, and in very minor degree on student evaluations of teaching. Peer group control is not unique to the college or university. Such controls are found in many organizations in which professionals constitute a major part of the work force. As means of managerial control they suffer in that they are subjective and usually do not yield the exactness or rigor that business controls provide. Again, however, one may speculate as to whether as business enterprises include greater proportions of highly specialized professional workers, they may have to resort to use of peer group controls, and hopefully will find ways of using such controls more effectively.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Consider finally the role of the president of a college or university. Think back to the loss of institutional autonomy and the increasing intrusion of "outsiders" in the management of these institutions. Recall the distinctive "normative" culture that characterizes the work force. Consider also its bifurcated and decentralized organization, and the lack of conventional incentives with which members of the organization can be welded together. Think of the extensive dispersal of authority for the making of decisions, particularly "product line" and personnel decisions. And take heed of the limited applicability of conventional managerial controls. In these respects the institution over which the college or university president presides is different and thus his task is different.

A recent attention-attracting book has suggested that the task is not only different, it is impossible of accomplishment. The authors contend that "it is probably a mistake for a college president to imagine that what he does in office affects significantly either the long-range position of the institution or his reputation as president" (Cohen, p. 1).

But there is need in any organization for a leader. Indeed, the management of an organization may be likened to the functioning of the human heart. Both the management of an organization and the functioning of the human heart require

6. Fred K.E. Balderston, in his *Managing Today's University*, Jossey Bass, Inc., San Francisco, 1976, and particularly in his Chapter 10, "Institutional Data Systems," and in Appendix A, "Checklist for Academic Quality Assessment and Program Evaluation," describes the evolution of such means of control for application to academic institutions.

energizing units to function effectively. Within each there is needed a directional force: in the heart it is the sinol atriol node, a nerve centre that actuates and regularizes the beating of the heart; in the organization it is the leader, call him executive, administrator, president, dean or conductor.

What is expected of the organizational leader? Scores of writers have enumerated the leader's task. Their views[7] can be summarized in this listing: 1) the development and maintenance of a system of communication, 2) inducing cooperation, 3) eliciting the interest, zeal, and loyalty of members of the organization, 4) viewing the organization as a whole and dealing effectively with a variety of specialists, 5) raising the standards of the organization and the sights of its members.

To meet such expectations it is true that the college or university president has less authoritative power. He is confronted with more subordinate power. He is buffeted by more and more varied intrusions from without than is the corporate president or the governmental bureau director. His ability to lead his faculty is circumscribed, even while he can direct the institution's support staffs in a fashion similar to that used by the corporate or governmental official.

Harold Dodds, the former president of Princeton University once said that for a president to advance a curricular suggestion was "to give it the faculty's kiss of death." And Robben Flemming, former president of the University of Michigan, when asked, "Do you have a plan for the advancement of this university?" responded, "Certainly, in the back of my head; if I were to make it known generally, it would be torn to pieces."

But these men, Dodds and Flemming, and other presidents, Butterfield at Wesleyan, Hahn at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Kerr at California, Levi at Chicago and Sterling at Stanford, did lead. Under their leadership their institutions grew in enrollments, in resources, in the strength of their faculties and in academic repute. How did they lead?

Butterfield is said to have used the "watering pot theory" of leadership; he was in close contact with members of his faculty and when he discovered enterprising and promising efforts, he found funds to support the individual's research or to limit his teaching load. Hahn led **WITHIN** the institution by virtue of the political strength he acquired in the state capitol. Kerr led by virtue of the respect accorded his intellect and his patience and willingness to consult. Levi

7. Typical of the views of those writing on leadership are these: Barnard, op. cit., pp. 226-7; A. Etzioni, op. cit., pp. 154 et. seq.; Jas. McGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Harper & Row, New York, 1978, pp. 19-21; Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration*, Row Peterson & Co., 1957, pp. 62-64; and John W. Gardner, *Excellence*, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1961, pp. 123-26.

led by virtue of the strength of a brilliant, superior, and consistent mind which earned him the manifest respect of his faculty. And Sterling led by virtue of great personal charm coupled with a very sensitive intelligence.

Clark Kerr wrote in his notable *The Uses of the University* that the president serves as "leader, educator, creator, initiator, wielder of power . . . he is mostly moderator." Later, in reaction to criticism of this statement, Kerr added, "What I meant to suggest, and still believe is that the president must work mainly with persuasion and not with dictation or force."

Confronted with the differences in external and internal environment, in organization, in the prevailing distribution of authority, and the absence of customary controls, the leader of the college or university requires the breadth of viewpoint and the skills of leaders in other fields of organization **AND** substantial endowments of charisma (be it of appearance, personality, or intellect) and the capacity to consult and persuade.

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